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## "To put in order" the Culebra landfill

An alliance between the municipality and Medtronic will seek to extend the life of the landfill.



The largest medical device manufacturing company on the island, Medtronic, seeks to dispose of 10,000 yards of non-hazardous waste when about 20 trips to the island municipality are completed. ( Ramón "Tonito" Zayas )

**File Note:** This story was published over 2 years ago .

By [Sara R. Marrero Cabán](#)

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The Medtronic company and the island municipality of Culebra announced an alliance on Tuesday to collect rubble from the landfill of that municipality and thus extend its useful life.

Medtronic invested \$30,000 for 20 trips, which could last until February, to collect refrigerators, tires, automobiles, and non-hazardous solids "that should never have reached the Culebra landfill." At the end of the trips, it is expected that 10,000 yards of debris will be disposed of .

"The Culebra landfill has been lacking in maintenance and proper use for the past 15 years, where it has basically reached a point where it has lost its useful life. With this process, this support that Medtronic is giving, we are basically supporting 20 trips, or 20 collected, of different waste, both metal (and) waste that is supposed to never have reached the Culebra landfill," he explained. Primera Hora the director of finance and philanthropy of Medtronic, Anthony Ruiz.

Culebra generates approximately 15,000 y<sup>2</sup> of non-hazardous solid waste annually, estimated Mayor Edilberto Romero. Of these, 6,500 y<sup>2</sup> are household waste, 7,700 y<sup>2</sup> rubble, and 800 y<sup>2</sup> are recovered and diverted for reuse or recycling. In 10 months, the municipal administration removed about 4,300 tires, 5,000 gallons of used oil, 77,000 pounds of ferrous metals and electrical appliances, and 83,000 pounds of debris.



The "Basura Cero" campaign has the goal of making Culebrenses accountable for their commitment to properly dispose of solid waste. ( Ramon "Tonito" Zayas )

As a product of the alliance, Ruiz predicted that the landfill could see an additional two to five years of use . For its part and concurrently, the municipal Zero Waste initiative will implement



the public policy of reduction, reuse, recycling and composting of non-hazardous solid waste generated on the island municipality.

“ In this initial phase, what we are is supporting the municipality so that, we can say, put the house in order and that it can ensure that the landfill is in compliance, first of all, waste is eliminated that should never have arrived ”, he commented Ruiz.

The campaign's goal is to hold Culebrenses accountable for their commitment to properly dispose of solid waste. Through Zero Waste, the closure plan for the Culebra municipal landfill will also be updated.

Zero Waste will seek to: reactivate the existing Recycling Program of the municipality, develop an educational campaign aimed at guiding all sectors on the recovery program, diversion and disposal of those waste that cannot be recovered. In the same way, divert organic material, vegetative material and "sludge" (sludge) from the water treatment plant to be composted.

Likewise, there will be transfer of bulky debris to the landfill system in Fajardo, a participatory procedure will be established that integrates the various sectors of Culebra in the creation of the Zero Waste program, the establishment of the program will be designed in phases with specific recovery goals , the development potential of local companies that contribute to the generation of jobs in the recycling and solid waste industry will be identified.

Meanwhile, measurement mechanisms will be established to evaluate the execution of the program and ordinances that address non-compliance, at the same time that the operational costs of the recyclable material recovery and diversion program will be documented, as well as the disposal costs of those solid waste that they cannot be recovered.

“In this first phase, we are supporting you with the disposal part and removing all the junk with a view to bringing this to a complete plan. Extending the life of the landfill helps them to manage the risk in the short term, but the problem they are going to have in the long term is making sure that this does not happen again and that, through the use of recycling, (they have) a holistic process , that they work with the residents, with the merchants and with other areas with the educational part, (so that) they not only extend the life (of the landfill), but also that less garbage and less waste enters," said Ruiz.

The waste will be taken to one of the two Conwaste collection centers in Guaynabo and Carolina, depending on the type of material. The alliance between Medtronic and Culebra began in September and, to date, seven trips have been made.

“Managing and extending the life of the landfill is only one step. I think the first thing is to fix the 'issue', that Culebra has an area to dispose of, being an island municipality that is surrounded

by water. It is a significant problem that they have nowhere to dispose of their garbage and, more importantly, that the island depends on the tourist part to be able to survive , ”Ruiz reiterated.

“Zero Waste is a cutting-edge project considering the limited capacity of the landfill and its proximity to the cessation of its operations, the scarcity of economic resources to cover the costs of transporting and disposing of its waste on the big island and the need to conserve resources. of Culebra, reducing the impact of disposing of this waste on other lands,” Romero said in a press release.

In Puerto Rico there are 29 active landfills. Of these, 10 are in compliance (sanitary landfill systems, SRS) with environmental regulations and can continue to operate. These are: Carolina, Fajardo, Hormigueros, Juncos, Ponce, Salinas, Humacao, Yauco and two in Peñuelas.

Eight landfills – Barranquitas, Cabo Rojo, Lajas, Moca, Mayagüez, Vieques, Culebra and Toa Baja – would undergo lateral expansions to bring them into compliance, while four would be evaluated for possible expansion. On the other hand, the Añasco, Vega Baja, Juana Díaz and Jayuya landfills are being evaluated for possible expansion under the new infrastructure plan.

The rest – Arecibo, Arroyo, Cayey, Guayama, Florida, Isabela and Toa Alta – have a closure order issued by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA, for its acronym in English).

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